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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their March 24 news coverage on the island's unemployment rate, which surged to a new high of 5.75 percent in February; and on the Government Information Office's (GIO) decision Tuesday to fire one of its Toronto-based officials for writing online articles smearing Taiwan and Taiwan people. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed China's plan to build its own aircraft carriers. The article said the move will surely keep China's neighbors on their toes. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" continued to discuss the recent naval confrontation between the United States and China in the South China Sea and follow-on developments. The article said those responsible for the marine survey vessel of Columbia University "should secure Beijing's consent to ensure no problems arise. They should also tackle concerns about possible effects on marine life raised by some green groups in Asia." End summary.

A) "China's Big Dream of [Building] Aircraft Carriers"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (3/24):

"... Judging from the military perspective, the costs for [building] an aircraft carrier and its real effects are so disproportionate that they are beyond comparison. Should any conflict break out in the Taiwan Strait, Beijing will not have to resort to its aircraft carrier. But once it possesses an aircraft carrier, in a short range it can break through the second island chain, while in the longer range it can turn the South China Sea into China's territorial waters upon which no one can encroach, and its power of intimidation will go beyond the Strait of Malacca and reach the marine channel of the Indian Ocean.

"Beijing's building its own aircraft carriers will surely keep all its neighboring countries on their toes. The U.S.-Japan security alliance will bear the first brunt, and without a doubt, Japan will strengthen its submarine combat capabilities and the intensity of its lobbying to purchase F-22 fighter jets from the United States. It will also beef up its anti-submarine combat capabilities and incorporate into [its] defense plan guidelines the factor of China building aircraft carriers. ..."

B) "U.S. Ship vs. U.N., PRC Laws"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/24):

"A U.S. survey vessel is risking another confrontation in the waters around China when it arrives in the region this week -- less than a month after a standoff near Hainan Island between Chinese patrol boats and a U.S. Navy surveillance ship. ... The marine survey vessel has impeccable scientific credentials. There is no doubt the survey off Taiwan and the southern mainland is genuine and scientifically valid. But operating within China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) without permission is provocation. The ship's

visit could be even more provocative than the USNS Impeccable's mission that led to the recent standoff.

"Beijing's stance on its EEZ over the Impeccable incident should give the Columbia University scientists pause for thought. Right or wrong, it has accused the U.S. of violating international and Chinese laws by conducting surveillance in its exclusive zone. Those responsible for the Langseth survey should secure Beijing's consent to ensure no problems arise. They should also tackle concerns about possible effects on marine life raised by some green groups in Asia. ..."

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